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Dear Colleagues,

One of the main concerns of the Association is to keep all our members currently informed, mainly through electronic mail, of what is going on in our field. Hoping that we have been quite efficient in this respect, instead of giving you more news now, I would rather speak in more detail about those RAAS activities that seem to have more relevance for the future, offering our members excellent professional opportunities.

In March, I attended the EAAS board meeting ably hosted in Athens by the Hellenic Association for American Studies (HELAAS) and co-sponsored by the American College of Greece, the Onassis Foundation, the Athens chapters of the Indianapolis University and the University of LaVerne. Preceding the 2004 EAAS biennial Conference „America in the

Martanovski in 2002, he is the third RAAS member to be awarded an EAAS Travel Grant. If you qualify for a 2004 grant, don't hesitate to apply for it. Along the same line I would like to mention that several RAAS members have received funding to participate in various international conferences and seminars after they applied for it following the announcements received from our association.

Apart from its semi-annual Newsletter, American Studies in Europe, and the European Journal, the first edition of which was distributed to all our members for inspection, as agreed in Athens, the EAAS has already offered its members another important information and communication tool - a new expanded and updated website (<http://www.eaas.info>). It provides information about EAAS,

Letter from the President

Course of Human Events: Presentations and Interpretations" to be held in Prague, April 2-5, the meeting established new guidelines for the workshops, emphasizing the need to encourage European approaches to American Studies as well as „conceptual and philosophical perceptions" alongside discussions of various significant aspects of the American experience. After a thorough selection process, the board selected 8 parallel lectures, three shoptalks and 26 out of 47 workshop proposals. The selected proposals published in the May issue of the EAAS Newsletter. Encouraging our members to submit proposals for individual papers to the workshop organizers, I must, however, admit I was somewhat disappointed to see that there were no proposals for lectures and/or workshops coming from Romania.

A substantive decision of the Board was the unanimous acceptance of the Russian Society for American Studies as the twenty-first member of the EAAS. Among other issues of special interest to our members was the report from the Executive Board regarding the EAAS 2003 Grants Allocations. The Board awarded one Intra-European and three Trans-Atlantic Travel Grants, the Intra-European one (for research in England) being given to our colleague Dan Horatiu Popescu. After Bogdan Barbu in 2001 and Ludmila

Conferences and Events, EAAS-L Distribution List, EAAS Newsletter (including the May 2003 issue), EAAS Travel Grants, Book Reviews and Links.

In May, members of the RAAS joined in celebrating the tenth anniversary of the U.S.Fulbright Commission and forty-three years of Fulbright activity in Romania. The RAAS-Fulbright Biennial Conferences in 2000 and 2002 were presented as examples of successful educational and cultural exchanges between the U.S. and Romania. You will find more details about the celebration later in this Newsletter.

The RAAS will hold its Third Biennial Conference „Our America: People, Places, Times" next February in Bucharest. The Conference will also host the RAAS General Meeting on the agenda of which we included reports on the RAAS activities since 2002 and the new RAAS board elections. We count on the participation of many of our colleagues from across Romania and from abroad and we hope to make the Conference, as in the past, a challenging forum for cross-cultural discussion. In the meantime, we'll try to keep you informed of all the events that may be of interest for our whole community of American Studies scholars.

Rodica Mihaila
RAAS President

A Lesson for the Teacher

Dr. Victoria Seitz

University of California at San Bernardino

Fulbright Senior Scholar, Academy of Economics, University of Bucharest

As educators, no matter what grade level, we serve the role of information distributors to students. At the university level, professors have spent years learning about topics of interest to them and of interest to their professors as they achieved their doctorate in a field. So it would seem that we have learned the lessons so our students can benefit from our education.

But learning is a life long process, and as one individual told me, the day you stop learning is the day you die. I have often communicated to my students that the University experience is meant to teach you to be teachable. What is learned in books in the classroom is so little to what we can learn in life.

Teaching in Romania has been a lesson for this teacher in a very positive way. So much so that it has inspired development of a framework for other educators to benefit for teaching in countries outside their own place of residence. Primarily, the influence of culture on the educational environment plays such a vital role that any professor that has the opportunity to teach elsewhere might consider such a lesson as well as an understanding of socio-demographic characteristics of that country to be better teachers.

Students are not the same everywhere, which is rather simple to state but can be difficult to implement when coming from a different country. I realized that in most cases teaching in Bucharest, that students, in many ways, are like students in the US; however, their perceptions and attitudes vary greatly. Now that professors throughout the world are called upon for their expertise in other countries to teach, the importance of differences in students affects how educators should manage delivery of information. For educators to be successful in another country, although the World Almanac is a wonderful tool to get the basics, it is also important to take time to find out what is important to students. One attitude is clear for all students, they are in school to get better opportunities; however, when it comes to defining examples for clarification of concepts get a lesson from them and find out what is important.

Teaching at the University of Bucharest has been a delightful experience. At first I gasped at the thought of teaching advertising to liberal arts majors. But another lesson was learned. As opposed to my university in California, where business majors are frowned upon, these students were „hip” to marketing and advertising and realized the importance it played in society. This made my job easier and fun. We have been able to discuss concepts from examples that are prevalent in Bucharest and throughout Romania. They have been astute to the changes that are occurring in marketing and advertising and welcome the opportunity to evaluate good and not so good strategies employed by large and small companies.

Most importantly, students have been open to suggestion as well as posed serious questions for discussions. As we know in marketing and advertising, you have to know the rules and how to break them. Students asked why some strategies were used while others should have been used. If I have sparked more questions from them, then I feel I have accomplished my goal because students are consumers and will soon be making such decisions regarding the marketing and advertising of brands. Moreover, I have learned a lot from them regarding particular brands and the strategies used. As I have learned from them, they have learned from me, slowly but they are getting used to a different format for teaching - discussion and the value of their opinions. As an individual that worked in the field of marketing and advertising, if the truth be known, the value of theory is nonex-

Fulbright Scholars

istent in practice, since strategies have to be developed on the spot and implemented quickly. Brainstorming sessions were readily used venues for developing strategies and the idea that two heads were better than one was constant. Teamwork was essential, and the appreciation of members' ideas helped spawn new ideas.

The „real world” is fast paced and students need to be prepared to, as we say, „think on their feet.” As my students in both of my advertising classes are discovering, developing strategies based on limited research is something that they have to believe in. So they are learning to trust their decisions as team members decide. My philosophy in teaching is to give students hands-on experience in the courses I teach. It may be the only hands-on opportunity they get but it will help them to think critically and evaluate options based on limited information. The more that they have the opportunity to get hands-on experience the better they will be at „thinking on their feet,” an essential component of a successful businessperson.

I know that I have learned many wonderful lessons regarding students I have had the privilege to teach in Romania and they have made me a better teacher. They have been respectful, caring, and willing to try new ways of learning. In the meantime, I have learned a lot more about Romania, its culture and the young people that will soon be the ones taking the country to new places and its accession into the European Union. A practical approach in teaching prepares students for what lies ahead. If I can encourage that among educators wherever I work, we can all help students succeed in whatever career path they chose while also being citizens of the world.

Teaching at the University of Bucharest has taught me lessons I will not forget. I am truly grateful for the experience and know that when I return that I can enlighten American students regarding the delights of Romanian culture. To my students in Bucharest - THANK YOU!

An Experience with a Happy End

Tom Smith, Director of Instrumental Music

Pfeiffer University, Misenheimer, NC

Senior Fulbright Scholar, National University of Music, University of Bucharest

I vividly recall my first encounter with University of Bucharest Professor Rodica Mihăilă. It was during the September, 2002 Fulbright orientation session. „We would be so happy to have you lecture at one of our American Studies sessions,” she cooed. I immediately told her what an honor it was to be asked. „Good, it's all set,” she shot back. „I will bring students to the reception tonight for informal introductions.” She then quickly pressed a folded slip of paper into my hand. I opened the mysterious document just wide enough to see my name listed prominently on what appeared to be a Department of American Studies Graduate School Fall Schedule. When I looked up to respond, she was already gone. „See you at the reception tonight,” I heard her yell from what I assumed was the street. I again looked down at the paper, and to my astonishment discovered my enlistment as a REGULAR lecturer. Moreover, my first session was scheduled to convene in a mere four days. I suppose I would have considered the aforementioned scenario a normal course of affairs, were it not for the fact that my home institution was the

in Romania

National University of Music, and not the University of Bucharest. „What on Earth did I just agree to?” I wondered.

To make a long story short, Professor Mihăilă's polite yet determined coercion turned out to be the beginning of a most pleasant surprise. Within a matter of days, my disposition had changed from „How do I have time for this?” into „I really love this class.” The premise of my lectures was supposedly Jazz Music and American Sociological Parallels. But, it was not long before the classes spiraled into a plethora of related and sometimes not so related topics; especially those that satisfied my own urges to explore the idiosyncracies of the American political system.

I especially remember the week when President Bush came to extend Romania an invitation into NATO. That week the students asked me to forego the usual topics, to instead devote more time to the subject at hand. This was one of many times when I realized that my American Studies students were pretty sharp customers, and the equal of any graduate students I had ever encountered. They may not understand the principles behind a credit card, but the youthful Romanian intelligentsia absolutely understand political gamesmanship. In fact there are many political nuances that my young Romanian friends could explain to the politically unwashed of my own country. I remember that particular session very well, because I recall with fondness how much they impressed me. They told me they believed that presidential character DID matter, that the American Supreme Court did not steal the American election of 2000, but that hanging chads almost did, that there was little difference in the ethics of either the Democratic or Republican parties, and that George Bush called himself a Texas cowboy, because Maine lobster fishing is probably not considered as masculine to the average voting American. I also recall the statements made by one of my more talkative students regarding what she considered Romania's „interesting” invitation into NATO. „What do they want from us?” she bellowed. „NATO appears interested in specialization at the moment,” I answered. „They seem to really like those Romanian mountain soldiers.” Soooo....our new NATO friends would like us to go fetch the especially vicious Al Qaeda who are still in Afghanistan,” she immediately chimed back. „You know who they are Professor Smith. They are the ones you Americans are tired of chasing.” Dead silence.

Later, we were honored (if not a little confused) to learn that our discussions had reached the attention of senior American diplomats. In fact, two weeks after the NATO lecture, our class was visited by the American Cultural attaché himself. „How you ever got them to embrace western politics by listening to jazz I will never know,” he told me. Frankly, I never had the heart to tell him that I was just as clueless as he was. Despite the numerous multicultural inroads my students and I forged, they paled in comparison to the enduring bonds of friendship that prevailed. I will never forget that wonderful Christmas party they organized, or the fine young man who taught my son French and showed my wife how to pay the cable bill. These are kindnesses not so easily forgotten in a person's life.

Recently Professor Mihăilă stated in public forum that I had made a difference in the lives of her students. I thank her with

more than a fair dose of embarrassment, since it is I who has been positively altered. And far more comprehensively than any random musings I may have donated to the intellectual psyche of the University of Bucharest. There was a time when I absolutely hated to hear someone utter the expression „young people are our future.” I used to think it was the single most inane line ever conceived. Now, I guess I will have to drop some of my cynicism and rethink that one. Rodica Mihăilă's students have a way of eventually wearing you down... and sometimes it is for all the right reasons.

Coming to Teach, Staying to Learn

Kimball MacKay, Associate Professor

Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle, Washington

Fulbright Senior Scholar, Babes-Bolyai University

Thanks to the Fulbright Commission, my wife Diane and I have been in Romania for nearly four months, now. I am teaching contemporary American literature to third and fourth year undergraduates and MA students at Babes-Bolyai University; Diane is teaching second-year students English for Special Purposes. Before I write about our teaching experiences, though, let me tell a little story. Over the Easter holiday, we traveled to Bucovina to rendezvous with new friends we met at a conference at the „A.I. Cuza University” in Iasi in March. Dana and Tudor arranged for us all to stay with friends of theirs in Gura Humorului. For four or five days, we ventured out to visit the painted monasteries, returning to the house in the evening. Our final evening in Gura Humorului, we all had a long and heated conversation about the perception and representation of Romania and Romanians in U.S., about how, for the most part, Romania to Americans is Dracula, Ceaușescu, and Nadia Comăneci; how, since '89, the perception of Romania has been largely reduced—in the popular mind anyway—to images of a kind of sentimentalized poverty, typified by portraits of needy orphans that accompany pleas for donations. Responding to this kind of synecdoche, one Romanian member of our party said, „If that's what brings in the money, maybe we don't want it.” While not denying the difficulties facing the nation and its people, he was arguing for the recognition of the complexity of Romania, the depth and breadth of the country's potent-and sometimes confusing—contemporary life. He was arguing against the tendency of the West-especially of the U.S.-to simplify those complexities, to see in the unfamiliar either the image of the 'underdeveloped' or a romanticized, pastoral, prelapsarian culture worthy of 'preservation' rather than full recognition. He was arguing against the 'othering' of Romania. That evening's conversation is a central image for my experience here, in a way: I have to admit, quite shamefacedly, that I assumed I would be bringing something 'new' to the intellectual and academic life of my students and my university here—new material, a new approach. Instead, I found students who, even given the difficulties they face in gaining access to books (perhaps the single most difficult problem I've seen in the academic world here), are astonishingly well read and prepared, astonishingly sharp and insightful readers and thinkers—more so than many of my students at home. There are gaps—again, especially in access to materials—but I found that I could not presume to know what those gaps would be, could not presume to be the one to 'fill' them. I found something else, instead, something that's at the heart of any education: that through being as fully present as I can be, listening as carefully and paying attention as fully as I can, my own understanding—of the texts we read together, of the world we live in, of myself—has been expanded. Diane and I are already planning how we can return to Romania, not because of what we can teach people here—though we hope we have and will be able to contribute something—but because of what we can learn.

The First Class of American Studies Undergraduates at the University of Bucharest

Founded in 1999, the B. A. program in American Studies at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Bucharest, the first, and so far the only one of its kind in Romania, has served as a center for creative multi- and interdisciplinary study and teaching about the United States. It has attracted some of the most talented and intellectually adventurous students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages by offering them a prestigious minor at the undergraduate level. This year, the American Studies Program is awarding the first B. A. degrees to its first students. Since its founding, the Program has enrolled roughly 150 students.

Organized and coordinated by Professor Rodica Mihăilă, director of the Center for American Studies, the purpose of the American Studies minor is to provide students with the opportunity to gain a broader understanding of the United States through the study of diverse aspects of American history, culture and society, the use of several disciplines and approaches, and the development of a comprehensive view of the country's past and present experience as well as its future perspectives. A variety of courses within the three main modules in the eight-semester program, i.e. Culture and Values, Society and Change, History and Politics, introduce students to changes in social and political life and institutions, forms of economic organization, competing

myths and ideologies, and responses to world politics and future challenges.

The program has sought to overcome some of the limitations of present day Romanian institutional politics and align itself with European and American universities (where such programs have a long tradition); this has been attempted mostly by drawing on various departments, creating alliances and pooling resources among teachers and scholars from various fields such as history, literature, philosophy, sociology, political science, mass media, popular culture, the arts, marketing and law, whose intellectual interests are U.S.-focused.

Alongside well-established faculty, promising young scholars from the English department, have met this new challenge and elaborated new and highly stimulating courses and workshops such as Anthropology and American Cultures (Radu Surdulescu), American Life and Institutions (Octavian Roske), Native American Culture (Ilinca Iurașcu, Ruxandra Rădulescu), Language and Society (Ruxandra Drăgan), Popular Culture (Cosana Nicolae) American Utopias (Roxana Oltean), American Philosophy (Sabina Draga, Corina Anghel), U.S. Cultures in the Era of Globalization (Ioana Luca).

Colleagues from other departments and institutions (History, Political Science, The

Academy of Economics, The Center of Contemporary Art) have always participated enthusiastically in the Program and have offered (in spite of administrative or financial difficulties that a new program unfortunately entails) core courses in American Law (Cornelia Lefter), American History (Bogdan Antoniu), The American Constitution (Radu Carp), Contemporary Visual Arts (Irina Cios), Business Trends (Alex Konick).

The Program has greatly benefited from the contribution of American Fulbright professors, whose innovative, inspiring and challenging courses on Film Studies (Barbara Nelson), Mass Media and Advertising (Victoria Seitz), Mass Communication (David Ritchey), Law (Jim Pfander), Journalism (Karen Schmidt), History and Society in American Drama (Joe Martin) have become cornerstones for both students and young scholars eager to gain valuable fresh insights into the respective subjects.

Moreover, the Center for American Studies, with the help of the Fulbright Commission and the US Embassy, has organized a series of lectures, „USA Today”, and a film series (initiated by Barbara Nelson) with a view to giving the students and the faculty the opportunity to meet and discuss together, in a more informal context, major issues concerning American culture and society.

As secretary of the Program and part of what we proudly call the „American Studies Team”, on the occasion of our first class graduating this year, I thank you all and wish our wonderful students best of luck.

Ioana Luca

Ars Docendi within the American Studies Department: 1999-2003

Academic year 1999-2000 posed a major challenge for both the students and the teaching staff within the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures - University of Bucharest, namely the setting up of a new department with tradition in the US and Western Europe: American Studies. Initiated and relentlessly supported by Professor Dr. Rodica Mihăilă, the department evolved from 11 students in academic year 1999-2000 to 146 students registered in academic year 2002-2003. After four years of curricular experiments, I thought of inviting my fellow students to give a feedback on the extent to which the department objectives have been met. The survey, conducted between 20-01-03 and 13-05-03, was mainly aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the programs implemented and at providing us with a reliable image of the development of the American Studies department along its four years of existence. Evaluation sheets were handed out to the students within this specialization. I benefited from a 50% return rate of evaluation sheets, namely 73 respondents, which is a representative figure, given the scope of my research. Questions tested the effectiveness

of both professors and courses. Thus, 85 % of respondents rated the department very good and good, and 10% declared they were satisfied with it. Also, 78% of the students questioned pointed out that the instructors have been almost always and usually effective. Moreover, 76.7% of respondents declare that they have learned an exceptional amount and more than usual within this department. The students were also invited to give their opinion on the pros and cons of this specialization; most of them held in high esteem the wide range of courses and the tendency toward the generalization of studies, as well as the presence of American professors within this department; however, many respondents stated their dissatisfaction with the scarcity of scholarships available for American Studies students. All in all, the survey showed that the American Studies department enjoys a high popularity among its students and that most of the objectives undertaken at the beginning have been successfully fulfilled.

Adrian FLOREA

American Studies (recent) Graduate

**FULBRIGHT GRANTEES 2003-2004:
A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT**

**'Hate Speech in American
and Romanian Print Media'**

'Hate speech' can be defined as language advocating national, racial, religious and other kinds of hatred, instigating to discrimination and violence. The media is the main means of propagating such intolerant speech among the general public by relying on prejudices deeply-rooted in people's consciousness, arousing antipathy and even leading to violence and killing. Romanian media offers countless examples of 'hate speech' against the minorities living in our country, presenting them in black-and-white stereotypes and thus perpetuating prejudicial concepts about them.

In view of the above, I propose to carry on research on 'hate speech' in the American print media, focusing on racial issues - namely, the negative image of African Americans in the media and its own response to it, in order to compare it to that of the Roma community in the Romanian media. Building a case study, I will attempt to determine the origins of 'hate speech' against African Americans, the form and structure it takes in newspapers and magazines and the manner in which it is counterbalanced. I think that the American media best suits my purpose because the USA has a long tradition in democracy and is the least censored society in the world. Since it holds firmly to the First Amendment regarding freedom of speech and consequently, it is most exposed to 'hate speech', I find it interesting to see how this multicultural society tackles cultural pluralism and what 'self-correcting' mechanisms it has developed to neutralize 'hate speech' effectively.

On the other hand, I consider that African Americans offer the best case study possible because their social situation resembles that of the Roma in many ways and the stereotypes applied to the former also apply to the latter (for instance, both minorities are stereotypically viewed as marginal and inferior, both are known for their talent at music and dance, etc.).

Upon my return to Romania, I intend to develop a course based on my project, which I will teach within the American Studies program. I consider this study useful because it can shed new light on issues such as 'race' and 'racism', 'ethnicity', 'multiculturalism' / 'cultural pluralism' and the manner in which the American society understands and tackles them. In addition, given the fact that Romania is a former communist dictatorship and Romanian students are less sensitive to democratic values and human rights, I think this project can help them become aware of their own prejudices and develop tolerance and open-mindedness through critical thinking and dialogue. And last but not least, the data I will gather will offer me the basis to enter the Ph.D. program on American Studies.

*Ruxandra Dragan
University of Bucharest*

The tenth anniversary of the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania, which also marks forty-three years of Fulbright activity in Romania, was celebrated on May 15 and 16, 2003 with a series of private and public events in Bucharest. Dignitaries from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest, and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, the President of Romania, several Romanian Ministers of State, Members of the Romanian Parliament, Romanian Orthodox clergy, the Executive Directors of the U.S. Fulbright Commissions in neighboring Bulgaria and Hungary, Romanian and American Fulbright alumni who taught and conducted research in the U.S., American Fulbright alumni, and many representatives from the academic, scholarly, business, scientific, and artistic communities were present at the two days of activities. This successful event provided wide media coverage and general exposure to America's most prestigious cultural and educational exchange program in a country where the close and enduring ties between the Romanian and American people have been strengthened by the Fulbright Commission and its work and activities.

At the private luncheon at the Athenee Palace Hilton in Bucharest, one Romanian alumnus and two alumnae (Dr. Eduard Vlad, Dr. Cornelia Bodea, and Dr. Cecilia Vass), were jointly awarded the Executive Director's Outstanding Alumni Award for 2003. Mrs. Ioana Ieronim, retiring American Program

**10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE
U.S. FULBRIGHT COMMISSION IN ROMANIA**

"The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy – the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something that we have failed to see, or may see it more accurately." Senator J. William Fulbright

Director at the Commission, was also awarded a certificate of appreciation for her many years of untiring labor for the Fulbright program in Romania.

A public reception took place at Cotroceni Palace in the beautiful reception hall (designed originally by Queen Marie of Romania), where President Ion Iliescu honored the Fulbright Commission's anniversary. His Eminence, Most Rev. Dr. Chrysostomos, Executive Director of U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania, was attended in speeches by Mr. Mircea Geoană, Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Michael Guest, U.S. Ambassador to Romania. Dr. Cynthia Snow, Romanian officer from the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, accepted a certificate of appreciation from the Commission former directors.

On the second anniversary day, talks and presentations by Fulbright alumni and university administrators took place at the Palace of the Parliament. Speakers acknowledged, among other things, the contribution of the Fulbright program to the institutionalization of American Studies in Romania. In recognition of their whole activity in the field of American-Romanian relations, special awards were given to several academics. Among them there were two RAAS members, Dr. Rodica Mihăilă, University of Bucharest, and Dr. Ștefan Avădanei, „Al. I. Cuza” University, Iași. In the evening, a Concert in honor of the Commission anniversary, was held at the Sala Mică Concert Hall in the former Royal Palace. The presentation featured chamber music performed by a string quartet from the National University of Music in Bucharest; a George Gershwin „sampler” directed by Professor Vince Liotta, a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Gh. Dima Academy of Music in Cluj; selections from a musical („Ha!”) written by Fulbright alumnus Dr. Calvin McClinton; and a jazz performance by Professor Tom Smith, a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the National University of Music, and Professor Rick Condit, a Fulbright alumnus. The participants received an anniversary CD and a volume gathering several contributions by former alumni about their Fulbright experience.

Cosana Nicolae

**EAAS GRANTS ANNOUNCEMENT
2003-2004**

- The EAAS is pleased to announce the continuation of EAAS travel grants for postgraduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences who are registered for a higher research degree at any European University. Two kinds of grants are available, the Transatlantic Grant and the Intra-European Grant. It is expected that between four and ten scholarships will be available each year. The scholarships will be aimed predominantly at young scholars in Eastern and Central Europe. The maximum single award granted will be \$6000.
- The Transatlantic Grant will permit the holder to conduct research which illuminates some aspect of the relationship between the United States and Europe, or between the United States and a country or countries within Europe in a designated university in the United States. The term of the grant will be between three weeks (minimum) and eight weeks (maximum). Successful applicants will receive a grant intended to cover return travel, living expenses, and a limited amount of travel within the United States where appropriate. Health insurance will also be provided. Only students registered for a Ph. D. are eligible to apply for the Transatlantic Grants. The Intra-European Grant will allow the recipient to conduct research for a period of up to four weeks in an American Studies Centre or University library in Europe. Graduate students who are registered either for a Ph. D. or a Master's degree by research are eligible to apply for the Intra-European Grants.
- The Intra-European Grants are also available for institutional research projects involving up to three scholars (M. A. or Ph. D.) based on the cooperation between two American Studies institutes in Eastern and Western Europe. In this case, applications may be made collectively; each (sub)-project, however, will also be evaluated individually. Although the EAAS grant program is especially meant to encourage American Studies research in Eastern Europe, applications from Western European scholars will be welcome if they are part of an institutional project as outlined above.
- Applications must be made on the official form and should include written confirmation from the host institution that the researcher will have access to the necessary resource materials, and a letter from the student's academic supervisor. Applicants will be required to supply a detailed estimate of the cost of their visit, including the cost of travel, subsistence, and incidentals. They should also state the minimum amount of money needed to make the trip possible. Applicants are encouraged to seek supporting or matching funding wherever possible.
- Grantee recipients will be responsible for making their own arrangements for travel and accommodation. Travel must be completed within twelve months of the grantee being notified of the award. Grantees will be required to make a report to the grant committee, normally within thirty days of returning from their research visit.
- Application forms are available from the EAAS Board representatives of constituent associations or can be downloaded. Details can be found on the following site: http://www.eaas.info/travel_grants.htm

**A WINNER OF THE EAAS
TRANSATLANTIC GRANT, 2003**

Ludmila Martanovschi

„Ovidius“ University, Constanta

On a Recent American Experience, with Nostalgia

The Transatlantic Grant awarded by the European Association for American Studies enabled me to do research on the American dimension of my project „The Construction of Ethnic Identity in Native American and Serbian Romanian Poetry of the Southwest: Simon Ortiz and Ioan Flora“ at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas from January 17th to March 15th, 2003. The proposal I submitted had benefited from Professor Dr. Rodica Mihil's guidance and recommendation for which I am most grateful. During my stay in the United States, I had the chance to work on the project under Associate Professor Dr. P. Jane Hafen's supervision as well as to be part of enlightening „creative“ experiences.

Attending my supervisor's course on Native American Literature, especially the classes on contemporary writers, opened new directions in my broader research of the field. I got acquainted with novelists such as LeAnne Howe whose **Shell Shaker** is a journey into Choctaw history meaningfully interpreted or Thomas King whose **Green Grass, Running Water** challenges the reader with a deconstruction of preconceived ideas about Indians. Most importantly, I joined a group responsible for the presentation of Simon Ortiz's ethnohistorical context and thus I deepened my understanding of the poet's Acoma Pueblo culture. My study of his work analyzes the sense of history as shared past, the return to the place of origin and the relation to the oral tradition as themes relevant for the construction of ethnicity in volumes such as **Woven Stone** and **Out There Somewhere**. These themes reappear in Ioan Flora's poetry from **Fifty Novels and Other Utopias** and **Medea and Her War Machines** though in significantly different variants, the most obvious being the Serbian Romanian poet's postmodernist approach to the tradition of written literature.

Besides research, I treasure a few other experiences that are connected to literature and creative writing in various ways. They inform my memories of UNLV, the American university that offered most unexpected cultural treats. The most significant one is Sandra Cisneros' coming to give a reading from her latest book **Caramelo** on February 28th. The opportunity to listen to the celebrated Chicana writer performing the text gathered both members of the local Spanish-speaking community and students, especially from the Creative Writing MFA on campus. Cisneros' characters voiced their fears and desires through her almost ceremonial acting to the delight of the audience.

Several people present at the event were acquaintances of mine. They have a special fascination for words and aspire to become writers. On several occasions, we had meetings aimed at starting a web literary magazine, mamaliga.us. The project is directed by John Quinn, who has been teaching Creative Writing courses in the United States and at 'Ovidius' University, Constanta for several years now. The first issue of the magazine will include the best literary pieces that came out of these workshops as well as recent work by well-established writers. After the magazine's release in June, the editing team will be looking forward to receiving new materials from prospective contributors.

Looking back on both the academic experience and the more informal encounters on campus, I can only feel enriched and grateful to have received the grant that made possible my trip to Las Vegas. Despite the initial apprehension about the dangers of the desert that surround the place not only geographically speaking, I found wonderful people inspired by creativity making the university a welcoming and friendly site.

Conference participation

Adina Ciugureanu

„Ovidius“ University, Constanța

Cultural Icons: City Lights and the Pocket Book

This challenging topic gathered about 40 academics at the international Conference in Rome (12-14 December 2002), who discussed both the publishing venture of **City Lights** and the work of the poets published in the Pocket Book Series. Besides the Italian participants, who outnumbered the ones from abroad, and who counted, among others, Maria Anita Stefanelli, Cristina Giorcelli and Sara Antonelli, there were Robert Lee, the author of a study about the Beat Generation, Larry Smith, another specialist in the 1950s and the American poet Anne Waldman, a close friend of Allen Ginsberg and, most probably, the last Beat alive. The papers and the discussions revealed various aspects of Kerouac's, Rexroth's and Ginsberg's work, the history of *City Lights*, Ferlinghetti's devotion to it, and the impact of the book series upon readers.

Ludmila Martanovschi

„Ovidius“ University, Constanța

Intellectual Challenges and Organizational Excellence Salzburg Seminar, April 2003

The Salzburg Seminar at Schloss Leopoldskron hosted Session 408, „Contemporary American Literature: Cultural Diversity and Aesthetic Continuities“ between the 2nd and 9th of April, 2003. If invited to establish which part of the session was most effective or meritorious, I could not choose among the many sections that proved to be as many beneficial experiences.

Emory Elliott, the editor of the recently published *Aesthetics in a Multicultural Age* and chair of the present session, gave a comprehensive overview of the current concerns in contemporary American literature and criticism in his „National Dreams and Rude Awakenings: The Global Warnings of American Literature“. The relationship between aesthetics and multiculturalism continued to be discussed in the days to follow. Marc Chénétier insisted that literature should disengage itself from ideology while the other three speakers seemed to emphasize the opposite through their choice of focus: Shirley Geok-Lin Lim used an inter-ethnic approach to an analysis of „terror and trauma“, Mae Henderson concentrated upon the „white Africanist presence“ or the narratives of „passing“ in African American literature and Helena Maria Viramontes discussed border crossings and read from her latest novel.

The afternoons were dedicated to further work in small groups. I was part of the first group responsible for enlightening aspects concerning „Racial Formations, Diasporas and Homeland Security“. Writer, critic and professor Shirley Geok-Lin Lim.

Some of the special opportunities offered in the evenings were: watching *Smoking Signals* based on a text by successful Native American writer Sherman Alexie and listening to readings from the work of the writers present.

Anca Iancu

„Lucian Blaga“ University, Sibiu

The „East - West Cultural Passage“ Conference

Every year in April or May, the „Lucian Blaga“ University of Sibiu,

together with the „C. Peter Magrath“ Center for Romanian-American Academic Interaction celebrates the American Week. This is a week dedicated to American culture and civilization, to American values, to American-Romanian academic interaction, to friendship and solidarity. This year the American Week took place between April, 7 and April, 12 and included student sessions, a creative writing, workshop for students and the third edition of the „East-West Cultural Passage“ Conference convening Fulbright lecturers and researchers from Transylvania. The students' papers focused on American literature and civilization and included such authors as W. Faulkner, K. Vonnegut, V. Nabokov, Th. Dreiser, J. Dos Passos and Andrei Codrescu. The „EAST-WEST CULTURAL PASSAGE“ conference, organized in association with The Fulbright Commission in Romania, took place on Friday, April 11 and included an opening plenary whose key-note speaker was Dr. Mihaela Irimia, Director of Studies, British Cultural Studies Centre, Bucharest (this year, happily, experts on British Studies joined specialists in American Studies), and several workshops running in parallel. Dr. Irimia challenged the audience with a very contemporary topic. „In the Wake of International Trauma: Orientalism and Occidentalism Reconsidered“. The themes of the workshops were also very well chosen and thought-provoking. They ranged from discussions about postcoloniality(ism) and global civilization, led by Dr. Mihaela Irimia, Bucharest University, Dr. Adriana Neagu, „Lucian Blaga“ University Sibiu and Dr. Eric Gilder, „Lucian Blaga“ University, Sibiu, to documentary fine art photos (Chair Dr. Kathleen Laraia McLaughlin), translation of poetry (Chair Dr. Monica Cure), modern American poetry (Chair Dr. Kim McKay) and an overview of the American Music Theater (Chair Dr. Vince Liotta).

Corina Anghel

University of Bucharest

The International Postgraduate Conference Postmodern Deconstructions Erlangen, Germany

This conference took place between November 22-24 2002, in Erlangen, a small university town situated near Nuremberg. The keynote speaker of the conference was Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who lectured on „Transgressing Third Space.“

Each panel consisted of 6 papers that centered around a common theme: „The Spectre of Theory,“ „Narrating Self and Other,“ „TranscendSense,“ „CyberSoma,“ „Postmodern Histories,“ „PostSpaces,“ „Postcolonial Literatures“ and „The Global Empire.“

Many papers focused on literary works from all over the world, spanning from American authors, such as Tim O'Brien and Don DeLillo to English and postcolonial writers, such as A. S. Byatt, J. M. Coetzee and Salman Rushdie.

Other papers that had a higher degree of abstraction explored the (im)possibility of theory to voice the postmodern unrepresentable (Carolin Roder, University of Cardiff), the movement of criticism beyond poststructuralism (Helga Thalhofer, LMU München), the relationship between Platonic terms and deconstruction (Corina Anghel, University of Bucharest), the postmodern as a drive towards the divine (Michael O'Sullivan, University of Cork, Ireland).

Call for papers

Dear Colleagues,

The Romanian Association for American Studies - RAAS meeting will be held on 7 February 2004 in Bucharest, at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, str. Pitar Mos 7-11, Amfiteatrul Eminescu, at 5:00 PM. The main points on the agenda are : 1. RAAS activities and achievements since 2002; 2. New RAAS board elections. Suggestions, contributions, nominations are most welcome. Please plan and confirm participation - it is a great occasion to think and shape future RAAS matters. Looking forward to meeting you all there.

RAAS President,
Rodica Mibăilă

1. RAAS Biennial Conference 2004 OUR AMERICA: PEOPLE, PLACES, TIMES

Organizers:

The Romanian Association for American Studies

The Romanian - U.S. Fulbright Commission

6-8 February 2004

The Romanian Association for American Studies and the Romanian - U.S. Fulbright Commission invite paper proposals for our third biennial conference to be held in Bucharest on February 6-8, 2004 at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. The theme is „Our America: People, Places, Times“. Proposals are welcome from all researchers in the field, from senior colleagues to postgraduates on any theme in American Studies from a multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary direction or may examine a topic from the perspective of literature, culture, history, politics, social sciences, business/economics, visual arts, architecture, music, film or any other approach contributing to the study of America.

■ Individual oral presentations should not exceed 20 minutes.

■ Selections of papers presented at preceding RAAS conferences have been published in volumes form and we envision a publication this time. To be acceptable for publication revised conference papers from RAAS members should be of 4- 5000 words, in MLA format.

■ Participants wishing to join RAAS may do so at the conference.

■ The conference fee is 200.000 lei

■ Proposals (300 words), including a provisional title, should be submitted by 1 October 2003 to:

Ruxandra Radulescu (ruxandra@fx.ro)

Mihaela Precup (mihaela_precup@yahoo.com)

2. In(ter)discipline: New Languages for Criticism

An International Conference, 19-21 September 2003

University of Cambridge, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities Sidney Sussex College, UK

This conference aims to stimulate discussion about the kinds of critical languages used within the scholarly as well as the public sphere, and the linguistic challenge that represents an increasingly interdisciplinary research culture within the modern Humanities. Given the conventions of professional critical prose in academia, critics are often expected to give weight to handed-down knowledge, to questions of origin, and to historical, cultural, and social

context. Often they are encouraged to avoid a personal style of writing. Might a more immediate and individualized response, possibly in the spirit of a 'close reading', lead to a better kind of critical writing that would send the reader back to the art work, to look at it, read it or listen to it again, with a heightened sense of understanding and - more crucially - responsiveness and enjoyment? Or is the outcome of such an approach likely to be atomism? As regards interdisciplinary work, are the languages used in the different specialisms transposable from one field into another? Or do we need a meta-language? What are the advantages as well as the difficulties and risks when using different methods and modes of analysis?

Proposals for papers addressing issues of in(ter)disciplinary scholarship and writing are now invited from younger as well as senior members of any humanities or arts discipline or practice.

Please send proposals not exceeding 300 words plus a brief biographical note to Dr Beate Perrey via e-mail bep1000@cam.ac.uk, or fax (+44)1223 765276, or post (see below)

■ DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: MONDAY 30 JUNE 2003

■ NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE: MONDAY 7 JULY 2003.

Papers by conference speakers as well as a selection of proposed papers that could not be accommodated in the conference will be published in a book. This conference forms part of the long-term research programme New Languages for Criticism: Cross-currents and Resistances, co-directed by Prof. Dame Gillian Beer, Prof. Malcolm Bowie and Dr Beate Perrey, and sponsored by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASH) of the University of Cambridge.

■ For more information and to register, please visit the project website: <http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/projects/newlangs.html>

For practical details about the conference, please contact Mary-Rose Cheadle at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Cambridge, Old Press Site, Silver Street, Cambridge, CB3 9EW, tel: 01223-765279, email: administrator@crassh.cam.ac.uk.

3. American Literary Geographies: Space and Cultural Production, 1588-1888 (collection)

In light of the recent „spatial turn“ in critical theory and various critical attempts to „remap“ the field of American studies, we are seeking contributions for an essay collection that investigates intersections between geography and cultural production prior to the founding of the National Geographic Society in 1888.

Proposals are invited to address some of the following questions: How does the recent turn towards spatial questions in cultural studies affect the field of American studies? How do the methods of historical geography and literary analysis complement each other? How does the geographical rhetoric in critical theory and practice influence the conception of identity in the imperial, colonial, or national contexts? How have the materiality and technology of geographic discourse informed subjectivities, sexualities, literatures, and cultures? While the collection will be organized around questions of U. S. literary history, essays that address other geographies (such as transatlantic or hemispheric perspectives) and disciplines (such as visual art, material culture, urban studies, and historiography-not to mention cultural geography) are welcome. Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

■ geographies of identity: gendered spaces, domestic fiction, religion and representational spaces, racial geographies, Black Atlantic, personal/psychological space

■ transnational (hemispheric, transatlantic, etc.) perspectives: imperialism, intertextuality, comparative approaches, Monroe Doctrine, gunboat diplomacy, Mexican-American War

■ genre and geography: pastoral, travelogues, romance, exploration, maritime literature

■ technologies of geographic writing: print culture, history of cartography, geography textbooks, land surveys

■ geography and nation-building: „imagined community,“ „democratic social space,“ National Geographic Society, American exceptionalism

■ mobile geographies: nomadism, exile, migration, speed, steamships, canals, railroads

■ theorizing literature and geography: spatial aspects of metaphor and metonymy, new formalism, The Space of Literature, poetics and „cognitive mapping

Please send a cv and a 3-page proposal (or completed paper) to Martin Brckner (mcb@udel.edu) or Hsuan L. Hsu (hhsu@socrates.berkeley.edu) by 7 October, 2003. Accepted papers of 6,000-8,000 words will be due by 1 August, 2004.

4. IV International Conference on Chicano Literature, Seville, Spain (12-14 May 2004)

The fourth venue in Spain is the University of Seville, where scholars and artists will be able to meet and discuss the multiple manifestations of Chicano studies. As areas of study we offer the following options:

Border theory, drama and performance, popular culture, gender theory, mitos, history, sociology, folklore, poetry, fiction, film, television, immigration, ethnic stereotyping and/or works of specific authors.

Those wishing to make a proposal (in English or Spanish), please send the text of the complete paper before 15 January 2004 to:

Jesus Lerate de Castro o Juan Ignacio Guijarro ,
Facultad de Filologia, Departamento de Literatura Inglesa y Norteamericana, c/Palos de la Frontera, s/n, 410004 Seville
(jlerate@siff.us.es jguijarro@siff.us.es).

5. The Commonwealth Fund Conference on American History of 2003:

‘AMERICAN CINEMA AND EVERYDAY LIFE’, University College London on 26th-28th June

The theme of the conference will be ‘American Cinema and Everyday Life.’ Up to 60 papers on the social experience of film-going will be discussed. Among the issues considered will be: how did cinema become a part of everyday life for so many Americans? What was the nature of film exhibition? How did the experience of movie-going differ at different times and places within the United States? How were audiences themselves constituted in social and economic terms? To what extent was the experience of film-going itself shaped and influenced by such factors as the gender, race, class, and ethnicity of members of the audience? How important to film-goers were the physical and social contexts of movie-going? How did spectators create meanings for themselves out of the films they viewed? How, if at all, did the influence of such constructed meanings extend beyond the immediate context of film-going, affecting aspects of spectators’ own lives? Did foreign audiences respond in the same way as American audiences to American cinema?

■ For more information on the conference and a registration form, see the conference website: www.ucl.ac.uk/history/cf2003

6. THE ‘LEON EDEL’ PRIZE

The ‘Leon Edel’ Prize is awarded annually for the best essay on Henry James by a beginning scholar. The prize carries with it an award of \$150, and the prize-winning essay will be published in HJR. The competition is open to applicants who have not held a full-time academic appointment for more than four years.

Independent scholars and graduate students are encouraged to apply. Essays should be 20-30 pages (including notes), original, and not under submission elsewhere or previously published.

■ Send submissions (in duplicate, produced according to current MLA style, and with return postage enclosed) to:

Susan M. Griffin, Editor; The Henry James Review, Department of English, University of Louisville; Louisville, KY, 40292.

Author’s name should not appear on the manuscript. Please identify essays as submissions for the Leon Edel Prize. A brief curriculum vitae should be included. Decisions about regular publication are also made at the same time as the prize decision.

■ Deadline: November 1, 2003.

7. U. S. Icons and Iconicity

AAAS (Austrian Association of American Studies) Conference November 7-9, 2003 University of Graz, Austria

Aids Ribbons. Barbie. Cape Canaveral. Ellis Island. FDR. Ground Zero. Harvey Milk. JFK. Moby Dick.

US cultural icons fall into three main groups: a) fictional as well as historical characters (Daisy Duck to Harvey Milk); b) sites, monuments, natural elements (Ground Zero, Vietnam War Memorial, Buffalos); and c) logos, isotopes, and computer icons (pink triangle, dot-com, Windows, trash bin, etc.). How do these icons come into being? Who controls their shaping? What aspects of an emotionally, socially and historically complex phenomenon do they cover? What aspects are left out? What denotations and connotations do they carry? What are cultural or political consequences of these icons? What is their relation to the mass media? How do they or their reception change historically? How are they challenged or toppled? Can we do without iconicity? How are these icons appropriated by those on the margins? Icons being symbols of the ruling ideas, what do they tell us about the relations between classes, ethnic groups and genders? And, above all, are they rather manifestations of hegemonic rule (Gramsci, Foucault, Laclau & Mouffe) or manifestations of a shared body of norms and values and therefore democratic elements (Durkheim, Parsons)?

Keynote speakers so far: Paul Smith, Mandy Merck

Concept and Organization: Klaus Rieser

Conference homepage: <http://angam.ang.univie.ac.at/aaas/>

■ Please send proposals for papers, including an abstract (100-300 words) before June 1, 2003 to: amerikanistik@uni-graz.at
AAAS Conference 2003; Department of American Studies; University of Graz;

Attemsgasse 25/II; A-8010 Graz; Austria/EU; Fax: +43-316-380-9768; Conference homepage: <http://angam.ang.univie.ac.at/aaas/>

8. Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-present)

invites submissions for the fall 2003 edition of its peer-reviewed e-journal.

■ Please see the call for papers link at

<http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/index.htm> for the guidelines and more information.

■ Submissions and queries to editor@americanpopularculture.com.

■ Deadline 15 October 2003.

An Unconventional Review

Dear Ilinca,*

Thank you for your phone call that found me overwhelmed by an intense feeling of professional failure. One of my students' papers says that Edgar Allan Poe was a Victorian woman deported to America for having murdered her newborn baby (probably in Rue Morgue)...O, tempora, oh students! It's true that it was an optional course of literatures in English and the student is majoring in German... But where was he when I read from the beautiful bilingual volume of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry and drama, with introduction, translations and notes by the distinguished scholar from the university of Cluj-Napoca, Liviu Cotruș? What shall I do now? Kill myself or just expect my natural extinction in a home for failed academics? „You will survive...” sings Tina.

In this dark mood my eyes fell on the Heath Anthology of American Literature I got from a charming American stationed in Deutschland who had studied in the same academy as Edgar Allan Poe and was also ready to say a farewell to arms... I was just wondering whether he is on the Black Sea coast now listening to „Red roses for my baby...” on Romanian wavelength... But long before the Heath Anthology, my first introduction to American culture had been Petru Comarnescu's *Homo Americanus* and therefore I was very happy to see some of his types - to which we should add some new ones - included in the excellent anthology of American Studies edited by Alina Branda, with Marius Jucan's most learned introduction. Besides Comarnescu's „types”, the anthology contains the work of other two Romanian explorers of the American culture, Virgil I. Bărbat and Nicolae Petrescu. One cannot be but amazed at their thorough investigations of the overseas realities, published as early as 1922.

As to what happens at our North University - Baia Mare, the field of American Studies is covered by postmodern writer (doctor mirabilis) Adrian Ocoiu and the fond of Cohen free-lance photographer Horea Nașcu. They are real heroes as they have to cover and discover lots of other fields as well. The mean budget of our university does not allow us to invite visiting professors. Books about the faces and sights of the US are written by travelers from the zone, journalists who are not afraid to publish in book form their notes jotted down during guided tours. Still, there is an achievement I should mention: the first book published by our Canadian Studies Center, a collection of articles in English and French about identity and alterity in Canadian literature. Most of the contributors are from the US. From among the Anglophone Romanians I have to mention Liviu Cotru, Horea Nașcu and the undersigned,

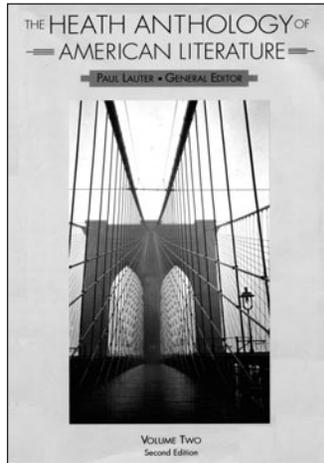
With best wishes and love,

Ana

P.S. Now it's May Day and I strongly feel like marching and loitering in the streets as my generation used to. In the meantime I concluded that the student was only influenced by postmodern thinking. George Eliot, murder, deportation, then T.S. Eliot... Long live the young and the restless! But I'd rather watch „My Fair Lady” tonight...

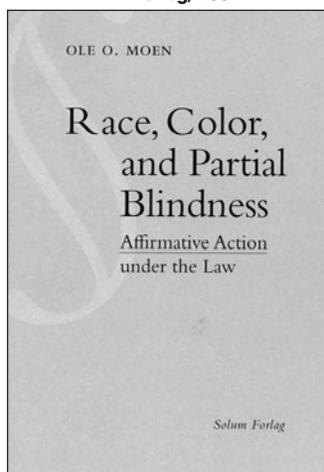
■ Edgar Allan Poe, *Poezie - Dram. Ediție bilingvă. Traducere, studiu introductiv, note și comentarii de Liviu Cotru. Institutul European, Iași, 2001*; ■ *Studii de americanistică 2001. Studiu introductiv de Marius Jucan. Ediție îngrijită de Alina Branda. Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, Cluj-Napoca*; ■ *Identity and Alterity in Canadian Literature. Identité et Altérité dans la littérature canadienne. Ed. Dana Puiu, Risoprint, Cluj-Napoca, 2003*

**Informal letter from Ana Olos to Ilinca Anghelescu*



THE HEATH ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE
General Editor: Paul Lauter
Lexington, Toronto:
DC Heath & Comp. 1994

OLE O. MOEN.
Race, Color, and Partial Blindness. Affirmative Action under the Law. Oslo: Solum Forlag, 2001

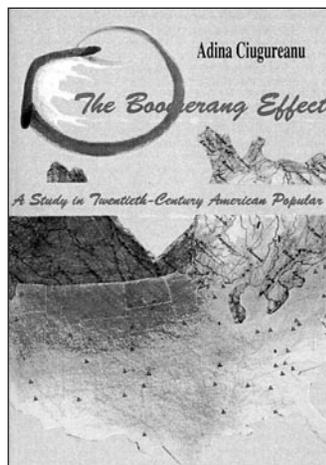


The Law as political Tool

Professor Ole O. Moen investigates the questions and debates raised by the introduction of a consistent program of affirmative action in the United States. As underlined in the introduction, the book proposes an analysis of the concept of affirmative action as a legal-political tool, focusing primarily on the discourse within the

Supreme Court since the decisive period of the sixties. The development of the political role of the Court as demonstrated in cases pertaining to the gradual introduction of the program of affirmative action is indicative of a major paradigm shift in American society, from a „color-blind” interpretation of the Constitution to a sustained, although controversial program of race-conscious measures. The necessity of a program such as affirmative action is seen by Professor Moen to originate in the „American dilemma”: „the acceptance of a virtual gulf between ideals and reality”. While acknowledging that President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration was the first to introduce the concept in the 1930s, the author highlights the stages of the metamorphosis of the „color-blind” ideal into a „color-conscious” political tool for the rights of minorities in the 1990s. With race still a relevant legal concept in the United States, the opinions of the Supreme court for the selected period of time (1961-1995) have also had to handle the issue of the benign and malign use of race in affirmative action programs and Professor Ole Moen's book touches on controversial questions such as the law as political tool, equality under the constitution and conservative and neo-liberal backlashes. Selecting representative cases and opinions of the Court, the book examines the impact of affirmative action in various walks of life, while surveying the main implications of what has been called „one of the most daring political experiments” in the 20th century in America. (*Ruxandra R`dulescu*)

ADINA CIUGUREANU
The Boomerang Effect.
 (A Study in the Twentieth
 Century American popular
 Culture), Constanța: Ex
 Ponto Printing House, 2002



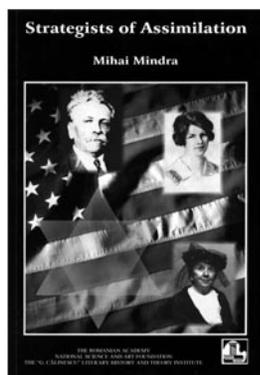
Elite and mass culture

This book is the result of Adina Ciugureanu's one year experience as a Fulbright visiting scholar at the University of Nevada, Texas. It has to be hailed as the first coherent contribution made by a Romanian scholar in the still academically debated field of popular culture. The main assumption held in the volume is that

American popular culture has European roots, thus originating in Greek and Latin mythologies and medieval cultural patterns. All these have been appropriated, creolized and exported to the world via American popular culture. As a matter of fact, Richard Keller Simon's 1999 book, **Trash Culture: Popular Culture and the Great Tradition**, starts from similar consideration, but to a different end. Simon maintains that great literature and popular entertainment evoke „comparable experiences.“ and parallels modern supermarket tabloid and gossip magazine tragedies to the great tragic literature; TV talk shows, sitcoms, and soap operas to the history of the theater; and **Star Wars**, **Star Trek**, and Vietnam War movies to **The Faerie Queene**, **Gulliver's Travels**, and Homer. In her turn, starting from several definitions of culture that can be traced back to Matthew Arnold, Adina Ciugureanu discusses distinctions between high and low, elite and mass culture operated by the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno), Walter Benjamin, Umberto Eco, Patrick Brantlinger and Nachbar and Lause. The study focuses on mythical heroes and superheroes (the knight model in **Beowulf** and in the Arthurian legends recycled in Superman or Batman), the vampire archetype and Dracula, and the model of the Virgin Martyr and the Aggressive Lady (impersonated by Barbie and Madonna). At the same time, it fast forwards on food as an identity marker, consumption in general, hyper-reality and entertainment. A special chapter is devoted to theme parks, viewed as „bubbles“ of consumerism and expressions of an American sense of the carnivalesque. Thus, sites such as Las Vegas or Disneyland become heterotopia zones, in Michel Foucault's terms, thereby embodying American popular fantasies about classic, chivalric, romance or the ancient agora. This alert study is useful for both American Studies scholars and the larger audience, as it highlights bipolar effects on European and American imagination in terms of hybridized European forms. (*Cosana Nicolae*)

European and American imagination in terms of hybridized European forms. (*Cosana Nicolae*)

MIHAI MÂNDRA. **Strategists
 of Assimilation**, Institutul de
 cercetri al Academiei Române,
 „G. Călinescu“, 2002



Additive acculturation

Recently published by the Romanian Academy, together with the National Science and Art Foundation and the 'G. Călinescu' Literary History and Theory Institute, Mihai Mândra's latest book represents the first published work which fully reflects his interest in the field of Jewish-American literature. By focusing on three Jewish-American novelists who emerged from the same background at the end of the nineteenth century (i.e. Russia, including the Polish territories), Mihai Mândra attempts at finding an answer to the question of whether genuine assimilation is possible. The theoretical background includes two studies by Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity* and *The Invention of Ethnicity*, as well as phenomenological overtones which may represent a connection with the author's previous publications. Thus, by looking at Abraham Cahan's **The Rise of David Levinsky**, Mary Antin's **The Promised Land** and Anzia Yezieska's **Bread Givers**, Mihai Mândra pinpoints the predicament of a condition which is inescapably ambiguous, dangling between 'additive acculturation', 'self-hating' recognition of one's roots, commercial exploitation of the stereotypical representations of Jewishness, and fighting and/or giving in to the ethnic prejudices or ethnocentric impositions of the American/Russian culture. (*Mihaela Precup*)

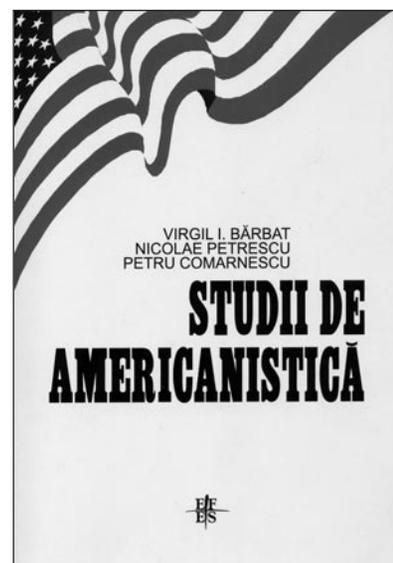
VIRGIL I. BĂRBAT, NICOLAE PETRESCU, PETRU COMARNESCU: **Studii de americanistică**

Studiu introductiv de Marius Jucan, ediție îngrijit de Alina Branda, EFES, Cluj, 2001

The surprisingly various ways to render the many-faceted portrait of modern America was undoubtedly a challenging and at the same time a luring task for many authors in the interwar period in Romania. Among them, Virgil I. Bărbat, Nicolae Petrescu and Petru Comarnescu, may deserve a special consideration for their coherent endeavour to interpret American realities. Their articles and essays, a telling testimony ascertaining the interest for the American civilization, its imagology and impact upon the world, can be read today with the critical awareness of having left behind the unaffected eulogistic appraisal, without tarnishing the reader's unwavering curiosity for the American world.

Attempting to draw a sketch of the ever changing contours of the American cultural modernity, the three above mentioned authors dovetail their essayistic, sociological or political reflections on contemporary America in fragmentary „studies“, pointing both at the novelty of the American cultural model and its way of life.

Marius Jucan



**Romanian Association
for American Studies – RAAS**

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